

Darlington Children Services

Contacts and Referrals

Contacts

A Contact is made when a person professional or otherwise contacts Darlington Children Services about a child who may be at risk of harm or who may be a Child in Need (CIN) or where there is a request for general advice, information or a service. All Contacts are dealt with by the **Childrens Initial Advice Team (CIAT)**.

The contact number for professionals is 01325 406252 and the contact number for the public is 01325 406222 (option 2).

Calls from Professionals

When a professional from a partner agency calls the Childrens Initial Advice Team (CIAT), the worker will gather the relevant information and a contact record will be created and logged on the electronic recording system. If the child is already known initial checks can be undertaken. This could include contacting other professionals to obtain more context and clarity of information.

The parents / carers should normally be made aware that a Contact is being created unless to do so would increase the likelihood of the child suffering **Significant Harm**. In addition, consent from a parent must be sought before further enquiries can be made with other agencies unless for child protection reasons this consent can be dispensed with. A Childrens Initial Advice Team (CIAT) Manager must authorise the discussion of the referral with other agencies if there is not parental knowledge or consent. The authorisation must be recorded with reasons why this was not obtained.

Where the caller is a professional from a partner agency and the child / young person already has an allocated social worker, the allocated social worker's contact telephone number can be passed over for the agency to make direct contact with the allocated social worker / team manager.

Professional referrers must be advised if the Contact does not proceed to referral status and is closed following the provision of advice, information or signposting.

Professionals who make a Contact will have an opportunity to discuss their concerns with a qualified social worker.

Member of the Public Calling

Where the caller is a member of the public, the details are taken, and a Contact is recorded on electronic system by the admin officer. This is then passed to a Childrens Initial Advice Team (CIAT) social worker to decide if further investigation or action is required. The caller may be passed to another service to resolve the issue.

Allocated Social Worker

Where the child / young person / family does not have an allocated social worker at the point when a Contact is made, the Childrens Initial Advice Team (CIAT) must establish whether the Contact could be dealt with by the provision of information and advice or redirection to other agencies or services through the Early Help process.

Where the child does not have an assigned social worker and there is no open case for that child, the Contact will be reviewed by Children's Advice and Information team and if Social Care assessment/intervention is required the Contact will be progressed to a Referral and assigned to the Assessment and Safeguarding Team which is on duty.

Any significant information received from the public about a child who has **an** allocated social worker should be regarded as a Contact.

Assignment to Other Children Services Teams

Reason for Contact is for support and or child protection / safeguarding	Where there is an allocated social worker from the 0-25 team (child with a disability) Contact will be assigned to the team manager for action.
Reason for Contact is for support and or child protection / safeguarding	Where there is an allocated social worker from an Assessment and Safeguarding team the Contact will be assigned to the Assessment and Safeguarding Team for action.
Reason for Contact is for support and or child protection / safeguarding	Where there is an allocated social worker from the Looked After through Care (LATC) team the Contact will be assigned to the child's Looked After through Care social worker.
Child protection / safeguarding	Where the child does not have an assigned social worker and there is no open case for that child, the Contact will be assigned to the Assessment and Safeguarding Team which is on duty.

Information to be Gathered at the Point of Contact

The following information will be gathered at the point of Contact, the Childrens Initial Advice Team (CIAT) will obtain as much of the following information as possible:

- Full names, dates of birth and gender of children;
- Family address and, where relevant, school/nursery attended;
- Identity of those with **Parental Responsibility**;
- Names and dates of birth of all members of the household;
- Ethnicity, disability, first language and religion of children and parents;

- Any special needs of the children;
- Any significant recent or past events;
- Cause for concern including details of allegations, their sources, timing and location;
- The child's current location and emotional and physical condition;
- Whether the child needs immediate protection;
- Details of any alleged perpetrator;
- Referrer's relationship with and knowledge of the child and their family;
- Known involvement of other agencies;
- Information regarding parents' knowledge and agreement to referral.

Referrers will be asked why they are contacting Children Services and what information they have about safeguarding / child protection concerns, difficulties being experienced by the family/household due to domestic violence and abuse, mental illness, substance misuse and/or learning difficulties. Any other services that have been or currently involved with the child.

2. Consent

The issue of consent is complex and can vary from the family's awareness of an agency consulting with Children Services on their behalf to that of full consent from those with parental responsibility to Children Services making checks and contacting other agencies to progress an enquiry.

Ideally, any professional contacting the Childrens Initial Advice Team (CIAT) must have sought consent to do so from the family prior to the Contact being created. The Childrens Initial Advice Team (CIAT) must have talked to the family and obtained consent from the person(s) with parental responsibility for the child(ren) prior to the Childrens Initial Advice Team (CIAT) contacting any other agencies following a Contact. Verbal consent must be logged on electronic system.

The issue of obtaining consent does not apply if the referring professional and the Childrens Initial Advice Team (CIAT) agree that gaining consent would be detrimental to the child and increase significant risk of harm.

3. Referrals

A Contact will be progressed to a referral where a team manager or designated deputy at the Childrens Initial Advice Team (CIAT) reviews the recommendation of the Duty and Advice social worker and considers an assessment and/or services may be required for a child at risk of significant harm or a Child in Need. **See**

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Continuum of Need for further information.

Referrals will be passed to the relevant social work team within 24 hours of the initial call being received by the Childrens Initial Advice Team (CIAT).

Within one working day of a referral being progressed the receiving Team Manager should make a decision about the type of response that is required and acknowledge receipt to the referrer.

4. Decision Making Process in the receiving team:

The process should establish:

- The nature of the concern;
- How and why it has arisen;
- What the child's needs appear to be;
- Whether the concern involves Significant Harm;
- Whether there is any need for urgent action to protect the child or any children in the household.

The process will involve:

- Discussion with the referrer;
- Consideration of any existing records, including whether the child is the subject of a **Child Protection Plan**;
- Involving other agencies as necessary.

This section should be read in conjunction with the **Children in Specific Circumstances section of the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Procedures**.

If there are indications that a child may be suffering or likely to suffer Significant Harm, the team manager **will consider** initiating a S47 Enquiry and may authorise whatever actions are necessary to protect the child or others in the household from significant harm, which may result in the immediate provision of services.

If there is suspicion that a crime may have committed including sexual or physical assault or neglect of the child, the Police must be notified immediately. The team manager will arrange a strategy discussion with the relevant agencies including at least the Police, following the procedures for a S47 Enquiry.

Any decision to remove a child must be discussed with the relevant head of service.

Personal information about non-professional referrers should not be disclosed to the parents or other agencies without the referrer's consent.

5. Initial Outcome of Referrals

The initial outcome of a referral, which must be authorised by the team manager, may be:

- a. That the child does not appear to be a Child in Need, which will result in one of the following: the provision of information, advice, signposting to another agency / Early Help services and/or no further action;
- b. That the child appears to be a Child in Need with a moderate level of need, in which case, the manager **may** authorise a **Child and Family Assessment**;
- c. That the child appears to be a Child in Need with a high level of need, which **must** result in a Child and Family Assessment.

That it is suspected that the child is suffering or is likely to suffer from significant harm, where the manager should consider **initiating a Section 47 Enquiry by conducting a strategy discussion**, where the various decisions may be made, including that to undertake a section 47 enquiry and commence a Child and Family Assessment;

- d. If there are indications that a child is suffering or likely to suffer Significant Harm, the manager may authorise whatever actions are necessary to protect the child or others in the household from Significant Harm, which will result in the immediate provision of services.

Professional referrers should be advised of the outcome of the referral.

Feedback on the outcome of the referral should also be provided to non-professional referrers in a manner consistent with respecting the confidentiality of the child.

6. Recording of Referrals

All Contacts and referrals must be recorded on the electronic system see Liquid Logic Processes on the intranet